IRREANTUM

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News of the Association for Mormon Letters

President's Message: New Directions for the AML

A few weeks ago I was deep in conversation with three children and young-adult writers: Loni Anderson, Laura Torres, and Carol Lynch Williams. We talked shop: writing habits, writers' groups, and publishing. Body language said our conversation was alive and vital. Then I brought up the AML. They each took a step back, and immediately denied they had done so. Our consequent talk led me to understand more about the barriers between academic types and practicing writers: academicians fuss too much and produce too little, and nationally published writers often ignore the controversial issues of faith which seem important to those publishing in the literary and popular Mormon markets. In the few minutes we talked, we didnt get much past oversimplification.

The past few years, following the advice of Eleanor Knowles, Neal Kramer, Jerry Johnston, and others, the AML board has sought ways to broaden its base and make its relationship to its members more vital. Jerry Johnston writes, "Mormonism is a populist movement. So the most vital voices in the culture have turned out to be popular voices. The culture produces and prizes gypsy storytellers: Scott Card, Gerry Lund, Anita Stansfield, Richard Siddoway, et cetera. Despise them at your peril. Unless the AML is willing to embrace these writers as legitimate members of the LDS literary community, the AML is destined to wither into insignificance, much like the Ladies' Literary Club but with less funding." As a board, we decided that the AML needed to explore ways to influence the current tidal wave of Mormon writing, without losing our identity as an association of literary writers, readers, and critics. Perhaps what we are about to do is like walking down the edge of a razor blade.

During a retreat last November, we discussed the scope of the organization, the role of the published proceedings, and funding. In terms of scope, we decided

to continue plotting a politically neutral course, maintain our commitment to excellence in imaginative literature, expand our scope to include the realm of popular literature, and organize efforts to increase membership. Secondly, concerning the annually published AML Annual, we decided to continue to publish and distribute the volume to all members but to republish the best articles in a special issue of *Dialogue*. Finally, we decided to eventually increase the amount of awards by establishing an endowment, possibly through hiring a professional fund-raiser.

In discussions since then, we have amended the bylaws to include readers, voting that the purpose of the AML is to foster scholarly and creative work and interest in the field of Mormon letters and to promote fellowship and communication among scholars, critics, writers, editors, booksellers, and readers interested in Mormon literature. In addition, we hope to promote chapters of the AML away from the Wasatch Front, to hold a yearly writers' workshop, and to greatly expand our reading series, through which we hope to connect Mormon writers and readers. Finally, we have given an editorial team free rein with the design and production of IRREANTUM, the new AML magazine that replaces the newsletter.

What am I asking of you? Let us know how to help you. Volunteer to help organize readings and new chapters, to write for IRREANTUM, to engage in conversation about Mormon literature on the AML-List e-mail discussion group, to help with the annual conference and the fund-raiser, or to participate in AML sessions at the Sunstone and Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association meetings.

—John Bennion

Local Chapter Organizations

This year the AML board will sponsor experimental chapter organizations. Recently subscribers to AML-List, the AML's e-mail discussion group, have discussed how to organize forums for face-to-face discussion; these chapters would serve readers, writers, and critics of Mormon literature who live away from Utah and the Wasatch Front.

Those who desire to organize an experimental chapter should 1) register 10 or more members with the AML, 2) plan six meetings or events a year, 3) send a letter of application (including a list of your members) to the board, and 4) send brief reports of meetings to the board. For this experimental year, all such communication should be addressed to John Bennion, current president (john_bennion@byu.edu; 3170 JKHB, BYU, Provo, UT 84602).

All members of chapters will receive IRREANTUM and the annually produced AML Annual. Members will also be encouraged to subscribe to AML-List and attend the fund-raiser and the annual meeting. The AML board will consider a charter for fewer people than 10 if there are not enough people in any given area. If a chapter grows to 25 members and the organizers would like to publish a newsletter, the board will help with receipted production and mailing costs.

Events or meetings can be author readings, discussions by those involved with the production of literature, or reading groups. If you have other ideas of what might properly constitute a meeting, please communicate that information. The bylaws state that the purpose of the AML is to foster scholarly and creative work

and interest in the field of Mormon letters and to promote fellowship and communication among scholars, critics, writers, editors, booksellers, and readers interested in Mormon literature. During the past year the board has discussed the need for embracing and encouraging excellent writing of all sorts; however, we must not lose our identity, which is to examine literature critically. We will encourage chapters to maintain a critical edge that searches for excellence and describes mediocrity in clear terms.

The board will experiment with chapter organizations this year and then present a report of successes and failures and a formal proposal at the next annual meeting.

Upcoming AML-Sponsored Readings

• The AML will host a reading on Thursday, April 29, 7:30 p.m., at the Read Leaf bookstore, 164 S. Main Street, Springville, Utah, 801-489-1390. We will enjoy the work of two poets with different styles and genres. For more information, contact Laura Torres at 801-491-8138.

Rick Walton will entertain us with his wacky picture books that speak to kids and adults, such as *Once There Was a Bull... Frog* and *Noah's Square Dance*. Rick is the author of dozens of books for kids in the national market, including poetry, picture books, and joke and activity books. His books have been featured on *Reading Rainbow, Storytime,* and CBS's *This Morning*.

Lance Larsen is the author of a poetry collection titled *Erasable Walls,* published in 1998 by New Issues Press. His work has appeared in national journals such as *Paris Review, New Republic, Shenandoah, Antioch Review,* and *Kenyon Review* as well as in regional and Mormon journals. He has received several literary prizes, including a fellowship from the Cultural Arts Council of Houston and awards and a writing grant from the Utah Arts Council. Lance is an associate professor of English at Brigham Young University and the poetry editor of *Literature and Belief.*

• Carol Lynch Williams, who publishes fiction for the upper elementary grades and young adults with Bantam Doubleday Dell, will read from her work to AML members and friends on Wednesday, May 26, at 7 p.m. in Salt Lake City. The venue is the home of Cherry and Barnard Silver, 4391 South Carol Jane Drive (2275 East) in Holladay (near 45th South and 23rd East). For more specific directions, e-mail cbsilver@worldnet.att.net or telephone 801-278-7141.

In the national market, Carol's *Kelly and Me* appeared in 1993, followed by *Adeline Street* in 1995. *The True Colors of Caitlynne Jackson* (1997) is listed as an ALA Best Young Adult Book, a Quick Pick, and a New York Library book. This spring's release, *My Angelica,* is also receiving awards. In the LDS market, Carol cowrites the *Latter-day Daughters* series on Church history for young girls with Launi K. Anderson. She is also working on a *Choose-the-Right Club* series debuting in May or June.

Experience with her own five daughters, ages 12 years to 18 months, sharpens her awareness of the needs of young readers. In addition to reading, Carol and her husband Drew Williams will respond to questions some of us are waiting to ask, such as: How do you blend family life with consistent, high-quality writing? What approaches to publishers and markets work for you? How do you measure the interests of this readership? How should parents and grandparents pick gift books for young people? What recommendations do you have for us as readers to improve our critical awareness of values in YA literature?

Introducing the AML Board Members

At this year's conference, held February 20, the AML voted in a president-elect, Marilyn Brown; a new treasurer, Henry Miles; and three new board members: Tessa Meyer Santiago, Gideon Burton, and Cherry Silver. Since then, the board has appointed another board member, Laura Torres. Because the AML board desires to be more user friendly, we encourage members to communicate ideas and concerns through the AML-List e-mail group or directly to members of the board. To help us become acquainted, here's a rundown of those who now meet on the first Thursday of every other month to help further the AML's goals.

John Bennion, currently president of the AML, writes short fiction and novels about the western Utah desert and the people who inhabit that forbidding country. Publications include *Breeding Leah and Other Stories* (Signature Books, 1991) and *The Burial Pool* (forthcoming next year from the same press). He is currently working on *Avenging Saint,* a 19th-century murder mystery. An associate professor at Brigham Young University, John teaches creative writing, the British novel, Mormon literature, and Wilderness Writing, a course in which students hike and backpack and write personal narratives based on their experiences. He may be reached at john _bennion@byu.edu.

Marilyn Brown writes historical novels about Utah. She received the first AML fiction prize in 1982 for her novel about the settlement of Provo, *Earthkeepers.* Feeling grateful for the encouragement she received through that award, she has endowed a biannual prize of $1,000 to be given to the best unpublished adult Mormon novel. The contest will begin in the year 2000.

Gideon Burton, an assistant professor at BYU whose specialty is the rhetoric of Renaissance literature, has also long been involved with Mormon literature. He won the AML prize for criticism in 1995 and has taught Mormon literature. He wrote a short story collection for his master of professional writing degree at USC, where he also took his Ph.D. He may be reached at gideon_burton@byu.edu.

Dennis Clark was editor, with Eugene England, of *Harvest: Contemporary Mormon Poems* (Signature Books, 1989). He has published in *Dialogue, Sunstone, Poetry Northwest, Exponent II, Literature and Belief,* and *BYU Studies.* In 1989 he won the AML prize in poetry for *Tinder: Dry Poems.* Dennis currently works at the Orem Public Library. He may be reached at sinned@ci.orem.ut.us.

Neal W. Kramer, immediate past president of AML, is an instructor in the English department at BYU. He has previously taught at Ricks College and Illinois

Institute of Technology. He earned his B.A. in English with university honors from BYU and his M.A. from the University of Chicago, where he is completing a Ph.D. He has also served as assistant dean of students at the University of Chicago and assistant dean of General Education and Honors at BYU. He has published critical essays and reviews on literature and culture in *BYU Studies, New Perspectives, F.A.R.M.S. Review of Books,* and the AML Annual. He is married to the former Leila Gates, and they are the parents of five daughters. He may be reached at nwkramer@adm1.byu.edu.

Cory Maxwell grew up in Salt Lake City. He attended Brigham Young University, majoring in English with a German minor. He also received a J.D. from the J. Reuben Clark Law School and worked as a law clerk for a federal judge in Boise. After practicing law for three years, Cory joined the staff at Bookcraft, where he's served as editorial manager for 14 years. He and his wife Karen have eight children. In her spare time, Karen directs productions of Shakespeare plays at the elementary school their younger children attend. Cory may be reached at cmaxwell@ldsworld.com.

Henry Miles, the new treasurer for the AML, was associate editor for *Wasatch Review International,* a journal of Mormon literature which is now dormant. He wrote a collection of personal and historical essays for his master's degree titled *Boomerang: Shaping Memories in the John Horne Miles Family.* He is currently working to catalog his family papers, which he has donated to the BYU archives. He has a long white beard and has recently acted as a stand-in for Legacy II. He may be reached at 1925 Terrace Drive, Orem, UT 84097 or hlmiles@enol.com.

Carol Clark Otteson has published a book of poetry; a nonfiction book titled *L.A. Stories;* essays in *Exponent II, Mormon Women Speak,* and *Clothed with Charity;* short stories; and poems in *Dialogue* and *Sunstone.* She is a former instructor in honors at BYU and at California State University, Dominguez Hills. She won the D.K. Brown Fiction Contest in1997, and she won first place in essay and an award of merit for poetry at the 1999 Mormon Arts Festival. She serves as secretary on the current board. She may be reached at ottesenc@burgoyne.com.

Benson Parkinson, a writer and editor, lives in Ogden, Utah, with his wife and five children. His published works include a novel, *The MTC: Set Apart* (Aspen, 1995), and a biography, *S. Dilworth Young* (Covenant, 1994). He moderates AML-List, an Internet e-mail list devoted to the discussion of Mormon literature. He may be reached at byparkinson@cc.weber.edu.

Robert Paxton is blessed with a wonderful wife and three healthy boys. He studied English literature, theater, and playwriting at BYU and then received an M.F.A. in theatre from UNLV. His writings include the book for the original production of *UTAH!,* which premiered at Tuacahn in 1995, as well as *What Wondrous Things, Heir to the Covenant, Brother Joseph,* and the screenplay for *Second Chance.* He has also performed in and directed numerous plays and musicals. He continues to write and also works in the financial services industry. He may be reached at rpaxton@infowest.com.

Tessa Meyer Santiago is the mother of three and a half children and is Kevin's wife. She is the editor of *This People* magazine. She writes personal essays, mostly

on the multiple roles of Mormon women. Some essays have appeared in *BYU Studies* and *Dialogue.* Her previous career included teaching writing at BYU for seven years. She is currently a first-year student at J. Reuben Clark Law School. She is a native of Cape Town, South Africa, and received her B.A. and M.A. in English from Brigham Young University. She may be reached at tm.santiago@cwix.com.

Cherry Bushman Silver studied English literature at the University of Utah, Boston University, and Harvard University and taught at community colleges in California and Washington state before moving to Utah. She presently teaches American literature and composition at BYU as a visiting instructor. With their two children, Barnard and Cherry Silver lived on a sugar-cane plantation in the Ivory Coast of West Africa for two and a half years. They returned as missionaries to the Ivory Coast and Zaire in 1988. Cherry served on the General Board of the Relief Society from 1990–97 and contributed to the volume *Knit Together in Love* (Deseret Book, 1992).

Laura Torres is the award-winning author of a dozen books for young people. Her first eight nonfiction books have sold over five million copies. She is a regular contributor to national magazines such as *Family Fun,* and her publishers include Klutz Press and Disney. Her first young-adult novel will be released by Holiday House this fall. Favorite writers include Wallace Stegner, James Joyce, and Anne Tyler. She lives in Mapleton, Utah, with her husband and two children. She may be reached at laura_j_torres@hotmail.com.

1998 AML Award Citations

Award in Devotional Literature:
Clark L. and Kathryn H. Kidd
A Convert's Guide to Mormon Life
(Bookcraft, 1998)

A Convert's Guide to Mormon Life runs against the grain of traditional expectations for devotional literature. Not at all meditative, the book is thoroughly practical. But that practicality gets directly at day-by-day devotion in discussions such as, "Since I joined the Church, my whole life seems to have fallen apart. What's going on?" (28). Even the guide's explanation of patriarchal blessings is practically devotional: "Imagine how it would be to get a personal letter from God" (212). The book's earthy pragmatism opens up real possibilities for worship. There may not be a better discussion of callings in Mormon writ than "Can I Ever Refuse a Calling?"

Useful though its aim and accomplishment is, this helpful book is also readable, a breath of fresh air among more conventional pulpit voices. Its style is lively and vivid, its examples clear and accessible, its tone personal and engaging, its prose crisp. *A Convert's Guide to Mormon Life* is easily the best-written book in the category.

Even for long-term Mormons who are not its target audience, this is a valuable volume. Directed to real devotional need, this book hunkers down in the trenches of devotional literature, focuses us on our religious lives as they are actually lived, and invites us beyond theory to practiced devotion. *A Convert's Guide to Mormon Life* might be the Mormon ideal of devotional literature: Brigham Young practical, it shows us how to be day-by-day devoted.

Award in the Essay:
Tom Plummer
Eating Chocolates and Dancing in the Kitchen: Sketches of Marriage and Family
(Shadow Mountain, 1998)

For letting his wife be.

For making me laugh. For making my husband laugh.

For refusing to shrug aside the responsibilities that devolve upon us because of the covenants we make: the need to provide, the need to nurture and understand, the need to remain faithful to and in the faith, the promise to bear witness of miracles and healings, the responsibility to share talents so that others may see more clearly.

For moving beyond the parable and finally revealing a middle-aged, Mormon, male voice that doesn't speak from behind the screen, maintaining the illusion of roast beef dinner on Sundays. (Chocolate-chip cookies work just as well for the main course.) Instead, for the first time in a long time, a male Mormon voice is not concerned with how well this Mormonism fits his life but merely concerned without beating it to death in an introspective soliloquy about his own humanness and his ability to live up to our unique Mormon promises.

For writing essays that present the male Mormon life as the communal life: wife, sons, friends, neighborhoods, colleagues, passersby, and the roofer working on a neighbor's house.

For tackling what has been considered literary chloroform but what, for most in this faith, is the central focus of our lives: how to marry and stay married, how to have and to raise children, how to love a partner who insists on keeping the centerpiece on the table in the middle of a dinner party, how to pay the mortgage for that bigger house on a salary that isn't quite big enough.

At last, a real voice that writes from the center of the life that most of us recognize as the one we live and believe. As we end a tumultuous decade, it is important that we recognize all Mormon voices: those that call from the fringes to help us expand our notion of who we are and those that write from the middle of the Mormon fabric. Too often that centered voice has been shunned for the other, equally important but marginalized, experiences that need to be told. Lest we forget that joy also comes from living the conventional, covenanted Mormon way of life, Tom Plummer reminds us.

Award in the Novel:
Dean T. Hughes
Far from Home
(Deseret Book, 1998)

A seasoned, consummate, and compelling storyteller, Dean Hughes has learned and mastered the narrative mode the hard way: by writing five dozen serial novels for teens. Now, in his landmark series *Children of the Promise* he has twined the cataclysmic events of World War II about the lives of Alexander and Bea Thomas and their six children. So artfully does Hughes wrap his stories about the historical frame of World War II that he has become the authoritative spokesman for the Wasatch Front chapter of the Greatest Generation, none of whom can fault his uncanny anthropological accuracy.

Although the war shapes each life in these historical novels, Hughes posits as the greater human drama the challenge of men and women at war living according to the tenets of the restored gospel. Amidst terrific pressures, Hughes's well-founded, very human, and very believable characters wage their Mormon brand of warfare in the ancient but ever-new battles between flesh and spirit, faith and doubt, hope and despair. His are real Mormons engaged in real warfare, and, although the conclusion of the battle is historically predetermined, the outcome of the individual battles is still inconclusive.

Dean Hughes's contribution, in *Far From Home* and in the *Children of the Promise* series, is unprecedented in Mormon letters in its skillful and realistic examination of contemporary Latter-day Saint lives under mortal fire.

Award in Poetry:
Alex Caldiero
Various Atmospheres: Poems and Drawings
(Signature, 1998)

Reading Caldiero's *Various Atmospheres: Poems and Drawings* is like eating pesto with capers rupturing between my teeth every few bites. The book is full of zany postmodern surprises, twists, humor, humanity, insight, and joy. *Various Atmospheres* does what literature should do: it holds up a mirror for us, enabling us to see ourselves more clearly. With Caldiero, however, the mirror is actually a fun-house mirror, so we see ourselves shortened, elongated, and contorted. We see ourselves as new entities
("I Want to Be a Tree"), in new places ("Under the Desk There Is Another Room" and "To Harpo Marx, in Heaven"), in new situations ("You Would Never Know by the Looks"), in new relationships ("I Miss My Computer"), and in new language ("Before They Mean" and "If You Count Long Enuf"). Caldiero's poetry functions as a ritual which allows us to reconnect with the truths, mysteries, loneliness, and joys that surround us. When I read *Various Atmospheres,* I recognize that the world I live in is larger than I understood it to be. I am left wholesome (as the epigraph says) and whole, nourished Italian style!

Award in the Short Story:
Helen Walker Jones
"The Six-Buck Fortune"
Published in *In Our Lovely Deseret: Mormon Fictions*
(Signature, 1998)

Helen Walker Jones's "The Six-Buck Fortune" is graceful in the risks it takes, in its telling and its content. It is understated in its derring-do, in its willingness to step free of its material and say: Listen. Here is what it's like to be alive at the end of the 20th century. Pay attention. Part of the story's power is its voice. It is genuine, honest, resolute. It is homespun and full of wisdom. Listen to the narrator: "I couldn't walk sometimes, I loved him so much." What she has to say she says boldly and absent of malice: "My mother had skipped town the week before, leaving this note pinned to the ironing board: I love you, Hon, but love this man more." A first-person narrative, "The Six-Buck Fortune" is a performance, a shape-shifting gift, a sending up and off (news about which there is much talk in our time). As a realistic narrative, it is rigorous and exacting. As a work of art, it is seamless, yet it asks what is so often asked in our finest fiction: what does it mean to render? Its answer: to both depict and withhold. It's a straightforward narrative that simply breaks our heart in its telling.

Award in Young-Adult Literature:
Martine Bates
The Taker's Key
(Red Deer, Alberta: Red Deer College Press, 1998)

Martine Bates concludes her Marmawell Trilogy with *The Taker's Key,* that rare thing: a final book of a trilogy with the strength to stand alone as a compelling work of fiction, satisfying from beginning to end.

Ve is a world endangered by the loss of the hiding magic that keeps it separate from the wider world. Bates unveils Ve as two adolescent girls, apprentice Oldwives, try to prove themselves great in each other's eyes. Tiu introduces the central conflict of the novel by boasting that her mistress, Marwen, is seeking the Taker's Key. Tiu enters the borderlands intending to find the Taker in the land of the dead and ask for the key.

It is Marwen's task to find the Taker's Key and to restore magic to Ve. Tiu's entrance into the borderlands compels Marwen to act quickly, and in company with the other Oldwives she begins her quest in the bizarre borderlands. The Oldwives are valued as much for their storyspell as their simple kitchen and garden magic. But in the borderlands Marwen discovers there is deeper magic, a creating magic linked to story.

Young readers can hold the power of story in their hands as they read this tale so expertly told by Martine Bates. A courageous heroine fulfills the quest, willing to sacrifice all for the greater good and yet with the gentleness to know that a life with love is a life well lived.

Lifetime Membership: Eugene England

Each year the AML awards a lifetime membership to one or more people who have contributed greatly to Mormon letters. This year's award went to Eugene England, recently retired from BYU. The following citation, written by Douglas Thayer, was read to Gene at the AML luncheon on February 20, 1999:

G. Eugene England Jr. is one of the foremost experts on Mormon literature, thought, and culture. No person has done more to further Mormon intellectual life based on faith in the gospel of Christ. Most of his 14 books, 60 articles and book chapters, and his numerous papers, presentations, and creative works concern this area (his bibliography is 14 single-spaced pages long). He is a popular regional and national speaker on Mormon literary and cultural topics.

Gene took his B.A. at the University of Utah and his M.A. and Ph.D. at Stanford University. Gene taught at California State College, Hayward; St. Olaf College; University of Utah; and BYU and also in the LDS institute. Retired from BYU last year, he now has a half-time appointment at UVSC. He is a superb teacher, one who has had a special ability to touch the lives of highly intelligent Mormon college students who were struggling in their faith and needed encouragement to stay in the Church.

No one has done as much to foster the teaching and writing of Mormon literature. Gene was cofounder and managing editor of *Dialogue* and cofounder of the Association for Mormon Letters. In addition to his own creative and critical writing, Gene has edited three Mormon literature anthologies: *Harvest: Contemporary Mormon Poems, Bright Angels and Familiars: Contemporary Mormon Stories, and Tending the Garden: Essays on Mormon Literature.* He has worked hard at both BYU and other universities to encourage the teaching of Mormon literature.

Gene's many honors include Phi Beta Kappa, Phi Kappa Phi, a Danforth Fellowship, a Wallace Stegner Creative Writing Fellowship, and at BYU Honors Professor of the Year, an Alcuin Award, and the Karl G. Maeser Award for Distinguished Teaching. In his writing, teaching, and editing Gene has persistently argued for an intelligent faith in Christ and the brotherhood and sisterhood of all mankind. In all that he has done Gene has been loved, supported, and cautioned by his superb wife Charlotte.

IRREANTUM's AML News department is edited by Tessa Santiago. Any items or questions related to Association for Mormon Letters news should be addressed directly to Tessa. If you are interested in writing reports about AML events in Utah or elsewhere, please volunteer. Tessa may be contacted at tm.santiago@cwix.com.

Essay

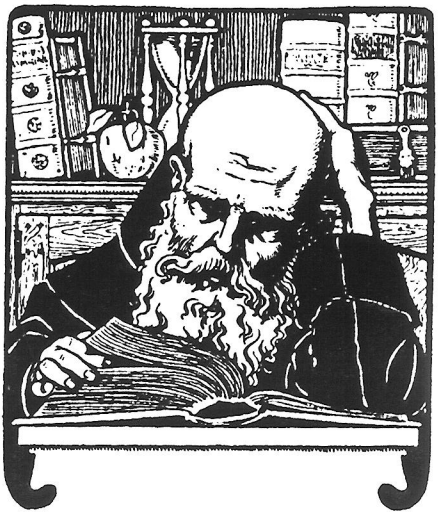
The Deseret School and the Missionary School

by Benson Parkinson

From pioneer times, the two great impulses in Mormon culture have been missionary work and colonization, telling the world what we know and building a better world at home. Applying these categories to Mormon literature yields the Missionary School and the Deseret School. These terms get us past the great unspoken controversy in Mormon literature: who do we write for? The Missionary School is literature for a general audience that in any way embodies our values. The Deseret School is literature for a Mormon audience, however defined. The Missionary School seeks to proclaim the gospel, as it were, while the Deseret School seeks to strengthen the Saints at home.

The terms Missionary and Deseret School say nothing about genre. Missionary School writers include Don Bluth, Ann Cannon, Orson Scott Card, Richard Paul Evans, Brian Evenson, Tracy Hickman, Lee Martin, Anne Perry, Tim Slover, Louise Plummer, Brady Udall, Maurine Whipple, Dave Wolverton, and others. These writers play to general or national audiences and genuinely seem to want to do good in the world, whether that means simply writing honestly or finding ways to slip in gospel ideals. Deseret School writers include Nephi Anderson, James Arrington, Neal Chandler, Eric Samuelsen, Chris Heimerdinger, Gerald Lund, Robert Marcum, Susan Evans McCloud, Rachel Ann Nunes, Levi Peterson, Anita Stansfield, Douglas Thayer, Brad Wilcox, and many more. These writers play to large and growing LDS audiences and seek to do good in that arena, whether through wholesome entertainment of a type the world doesn't provide anymore or through cultural and spiritual explorations that can get to the point quicker because there is no need to stop and explain.

These categories are not meant to be hard and fast. Their purpose is to help get us past the urge to dismiss writers based on their readers. We tend to chose a school early, often without a lot of consideration, and forever after assume that's the only enlightened one. It's difficult to serve two masters. Some writers (for example, Dean Hughes, Kristen Randle, Rick Walton) manage to write in both schools, and some readers are fans of both. But most of us hold to our school and despise the other. Missionary writers take pride in their emphasis on universal, human values (whether literary or ethical),



as if more overtly gospel values were less human than the other kind. Deseret writers take pride in throwing off the trappings of Babylon (whether cultural or religious), as if their Missionary cousins were not building Zion too. Missionary writers assume that anyone with talent would be drawn to the larger audience and that the home audience is hopelessly parochial. Deseret writers assume anyone with a testimony would want to express it openly and wince at Missionary accommodations. Partisans of both schools compare the best theirs can offer with the worst from their rivals.

If we want a literary culture, we need all sorts of good writing. Recognizing that will help writers from both schools, and LDS critics and theorists too. It helps the Missionary School by getting readers (and Deseret School writers) over the assumption that a book has to openly reflect the gospel. There are all kinds of ways to reach your neighbors. Sometimes you send the missionaries, sometimes you send a loaf of bread. Orson Scott Card has complained of being criticized and reported to the General Authorities for putting our sacred stories in science fiction and fantasy settings. Yet he has said openly that his goal is to tell a portion of the gospel to people who are not presently disposed to hear more.

It helps the Deseret School by getting readers (and Missionary School writers) over the assumption that a national audience is necessarily better. The LDS audience is always going to be less refined than the national one in some ways and more refined in others. Mormons of all people should recognize that readers are at different points in their progression and that the measure of a book is not where people are when they start reading but how far they've come when they're through. Nor is there any reason to believe that books for a national audience are necessarily more skillfully written. The idea is insidious, since thinking it can make it so.

It helps LDS critics by getting them over their reliance on terms like "regional" and "parochial," in which the answer is built into the question. LDS literature *is* a national literature (with an audience as large as many in that arena) and increasingly an international one. It helps by suggesting the need to hold Deseret School literature to nationally accepted aesthetic standards, and Missionary School literature to religious ones, and it suggests a model for judgment: How much does the work give relative to what the audience is prepared to receive?

And it helps theorists, meaning everyone from scholars writing treatises to readers looking for exciting things to read to publishers and writers seeking a niche. Any successful book by a Mormon in the national arena suggests the possibility for a corresponding one in the LDS arena, and vice versa. Give it all the same literary values, but shifted to address the different audience concerns. Imagine a Card who talked openly in his science fiction about priesthood and atonement and who made his stories fit what most Mormon readers believe about sacred time. Imagine a Lund who made palatable to national readers his visions and conversions and generated the enthusiasm for our history abroad that he has at home. There's no need for Deseret and Missionary Schools to grow together. They start from different assumptions and fill different needs. Let each find new and exhilarating ways to challenge our complacency. They'll do it better if they grow side by side.

IRREANTUM's Essay department is edited by Ed Snow. Any questions or suggestions related to essays should be addressed directly to him. If you have an essay idea or manuscript for consideration (including old published essays due for a reprint), please send it to Ed at edgarsnow@yahoo.com or 303 Peachtree Street N.E., Suite 3500, Atlanta, Georgia, 30308-3242.

Creative Writing

The Mission Home

by Edgar C. Snow Jr.

Bill Hagerty lay asleep balanced on top of two green garbage bags by a grate. A young woman in a blue dress quietly walked up to the steps next to the grate with a grocery bag in one hand, a cup of coffee in the other. She bent over toward Bill and said softly, "Bill, here's a cup of coffee and a couple of donuts."

Bill awoke and reached up for the coffee and bag of donuts with one hand as he fluffed up the garbage bags like pillows with the other.

"God bless you, Miss Julie," he said. She smiled and walked up the steps into the brownstone building next to where he lay. He sat for a minute smelling the coffee while warming his hands. He smelled bread from a bakery down the street. He removed his hat and laid it upside down on the sidewalk in front of him. Then he tossed a crumpled dollar bill inside and ate one of the donuts. Several people passed him on the sidewalk.

A short man wearing grease-stained overalls and a Boston College sweatshirt with a frayed collar strolled up to Bill and saluted him. His upheld hand was bandaged haphazardly with a dirty terry cloth stained red with dried blood. He had to hold the hand to keep it from trembling.

"Good morning, Stan," said Bill, returning the salute.

"Mornin', Reverend Hagerty," said Stan. "How's business on this fine spring morning?"

"Tolerable."

"Don't be late for church, now."

Bill reached in his bag and pulled out a donut, offering it to Stan. He refused.

"I'm on a diet. Gained too much weight last Christmas at the shelter. I gotta hurry, or

somebody else will get my seat."

Bill waved good-bye and turned his attention again to passersby. He tried to make eye contact with them, thinking he'd get more money that way. A man dropped a dollar into his hat.

After drinking his coffee, Bill untied one of the green garbage bags and pulled out a blue book and flipped through it, stopping to look at the pictures inside. He thought back to a few days ago when he found the book in a toilet stall in the bus station. While searching for toilet paper, he noticed the blue paperback book on the floor in the stall next to his. He read its title: The Book of Mormon. He reached over, picked it up, and leafed through it. There was a picture of the Sanderson family—a father, mother, and son—pasted in the inside cover with a handwritten message. It reminded him of a photograph of himself with his wife and son, a picture he lost years ago.

He recalled opening the book and tearing out a page, but before he could use it he saw words that stopped him: "Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy." A tear dribbled from one eye. "I can't use any of these pages," he said to himself. He carefully inserted the ripped page back into the book and flipped through it again. At the end of the book he found three blank pages. "No one will miss these," he said as he tore them gently from the glued spine. Then, instead of putting the book back on the floor, he reached down and placed it inside one of his garbage bags and tied it shut. Bill finished his business and dragged himself and his garbage bags out of the train station into the morning sun.

Rather than beg for money that day, he sat in the park and read in the strange book he had found. A few days later he finished it. His favorite part was a story about a man named Nephi and his family who left Jerusalem to travel to a promised land through a wilderness without any shelter except a tent. He was impressed with Nephi's determination to always do the right thing, but he couldn't help feeling sorry for Nephi's brothers Laman and Lemuel. Didn't they have the right to stay in Jerusalem instead of traveling with their father into the desert? Not to mention the money they left behind. After a while, Nephi seemed too good to be true until he read a passage in which Nephi called himself a "wretched man." Bill figured he could tolerate Nephi after that.

He thought again about the many wars fought in the Book of Mormon and was disturbed by their presence in the book. He had demonstrated against the Vietnam War in D.C. as a graduate student, but he soon lost interest in politics after his divorce and a bout with heroin.

The sound of coins clinking into his hat broke Bill's trance

and brought his mind to the present. He turned to his favorite passages he had underlined in the book. He reread how, after Jesus visited the people, they all lived in peace and without poverty. He couldn't stop thinking of an old song, "Tell all the world, join hands, join the love train, love train," even though he really didn't like it. And then he turned again to the part when Jesus calls down angels to minister to the children. Bill imagined he was an angel tending to the son he no longer knew.

Then he pulled a small card out of the back of the book he used as a bookmark and turned it over from the front to the back. The front had a picture of a white granite building, titled the Boston Temple, that reminded Bill of a cathedral he had seen once while traveling through Europe. Below the picture was an address for the Boston Mission with a phone number for a place called Mission Home located at 12390 21st Street. The office hours were scratched off. On the other side were thirteen numbered items called the Articles of Faith. Bill's eye caught the second article: "We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression." Bill mumbled, "Amen, brother, amen."

Bill raised his cup to drain one last drop of coffee and put the paper cup and the last donut on top of the pile of clothing and other odds and ends in the open garbage bag. A drop of coffee had stained part of his white beard. He stood up, dusted off his grimy jeans, and covered a toe sticking out of his shoe with a wad of newspaper. He swung the two bags over his shoulder like Santa Claus and staggered onto the sidewalk, the Sunday strollers allowing him more than sufficient room to walk.

"I'm going home," Bill said to anyone with enough stamina to maintain eye contact with him.

Bill soon reached an alley on 19th Street. Next to a dumpster, a man stood with a blank expression, methodically smacking flies with a swatter.

"Good morning, Frank, how's it going?" said Bill to the man as he patted his shoulder. "Here. Have a donut," he said, handing it to Frank. He reached for it without looking at it and continued swatting flies. Bill walked over to a corner of the alley and sat on the steps of the back entrance to a hardware shop and awaited his congregation. Two months ago Bill managed to start a weekly Sunday street meeting in the alley for his homeless acquaintances to come listen to sermons, most of them from Bill himself. He liked to teach from the Gideon Bible he got from the Salvation Army, but today he decided his sermon would come from the Book of Mormon. Bill anxiously fingered through the pages to find the passages he would read to the group as it gathered into the alley. Frank ate the donut and continued to swat flies landing on the dumpster. After he finished the donut, Frank reached into the trash for a broomstick, pulled it out, and dusted it off. Then he carried it over to Bill and bent down on one knee like a knight before a king presenting a sword.

Bill stood and bent over at his waist and took it, saying, "Thank you, Sir Frank." Frank then returned to the dumpster to continue swatting.

Soon about twenty men showed up and greeted Frank, Bill, and each other. Two of them stood in a corner and drank whiskey from a bottle, as usual, and yelled obscenities to each other. One man tap-danced frenetically among the others while reaching gracefully in the air to collect invisible objects, perhaps butterflies, his

torso, arms, and head seemingly mismatched with the wrong set of gyrating legs. Bill looked up toward the gleaming Security Bank and Trust sign on the skyline to see the time: 10:07 a.m. Then he stood and said, "Good morning, my brothers, welcome once again to the 19th Street congregation."

"Good morning," said a few of the men as they gathered closer together in front of Bill. The dancer stood still but bounced up and down on his toes. Bill asked Stan, who stood up front, to say a prayer.

Stan marched toward the steps where Bill stood and lifted his hands even with his face and said, "God of all creation, hear our prayers. Deliver us from evil and the bondage of the streets. Tell Brother Bill the good word for us." Several men mumbled "amen" as Stan continued to pray.

"Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive our trespassersby. Amen."

Bill lifted the Book of Mormon above his head and said in increasing modulations, "Brothers, God has shown me a new revelation this last week. He has shown me the way to end our troubles and return home. By reading this Book of Mormon I have received from God a mission to lead us all home." Some of the men cheered as Bill, boosted by the cheers, smiled and strutted around on the small space on top of the steps. But one of them urinated on the wall in the back of the crowd and yelled, "Yeah, right. What are you going to do, Bill, shoot us all to put us out of our misery?"

Stan pointed to the one who relieved himself and said, "Don't shoot Gregory. Just knowing he's more miserable than I am keeps me happy." Several men chuckled, and Bill grinned, his tongue sticking through where a tooth had been.

Bill continued. "Thank you, Stan. But I'm serious now, gentlemen. I know I've had some hair-brained ideas before, but this time God knows I'm right." He wavered for a moment; his voice grew reedy. The only sound was Frank slapping flies. "Listen here. When I'm finished with my preaching this morning, we're all going home. I know a place where people can fix our broken souls. Listen to this."

Bill opened the Book of Mormon and read: *Behold, they were cast out of the synagogues because of the coarseness of their apparel—therefore they were not permitted to enter into their synagogues to worship God, being esteemed as filthiness; therefore they were poor; yea, they were esteemed by their brethren as dross; therefore they were poor as to things of the world; and also they were poor in heart.*

"That's us, right?" he asked.

"Amen, amen," Stan replied.

Bill continued. "Now I know some of us got problems we can't help. Some of us are crazy, some of us are just damn lazy too. But there's a power that can lift us up, and it's in here. Listen to this."

Behold the disciples of Jesus had formed a church of Christ in all the lands round about. And as many as did come unto them, and did truly repent of their sins, were baptized in the name of Jesus; and they did also receive the Holy Ghost. And it came to pass in the thirty and sixth year, the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites, and there were

no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another. And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift.

Some of the men in the back of the crowd slowly drifted out of the alley as Bill continued. Bill started to read another passage when Gregory bent over and flatulated continuously for five seconds while some of the others laughed. Bill's face grew red. He looked up at the Security Bank and Trust sign again and saw he was running out of time.

"Bill, I'm sorry, but I'm so full of the spirit I just had to let some out." Most of the men laughed, and several of them doubled over and grunted trying to best Gregory, who then stuck his fingers in his ears and strolled around saying, "I'm not listening to Bill anymore, I'm not listening anymore," and then left the alley, and many of the men followed him. "Man, we need a real minister, not this idiot," one of them said as he dropped a liquor bottle on the pavement.

Bill pulled the card out of the Book of Mormon and then read the tenth article of faith printed on the back, but stumbled for a moment on the word *paradisiacal: We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.*

More of the men walked away. Soon only Frank, still swatting flies, and Stan were left. Bill stopped reading and walked down the steps toward them and said, "It's time to go home. We're the lost tribes of Israel returning to the promised land, the New Jerusalem. Let's go. You just follow me."

Stan picked up his bags and Bill's bags and put them in a grocery cart with a wobbly wheel and followed Bill out of the alley, stepping lively into the sunlight. Bill used the broomstick like a walking staff as he strolled up the sidewalk. Frank followed holding onto Bill's shoulder, his fly

swatter now stuck in the front of his pants.

They marched toward 21st Street, and Bill began singing "Onward, Christian Soldiers." Frank hummed along as they walked toward an intersection next to a fountain in a small park.

Bill pointed to the water and said, "Now we will clean away our sins before we enter the promised land," and walked over to the fountain and stuck the broomstick in the water the way he remembered seeing Moses do it in *The Ten Commandments.* He then washed his face, hair, and hands, and his companions joined him. Stan fished a bar of soap out of one of his bags, and all of them took off their shirts and bathed their torsos, arms, and faces, sharing a towel donated by Stan. People stared at them, and a policeman walked by frowning and shaking his head.

As soon as the men had combed their hair with their hands, Bill took charge again as they marched in single file up 21st Street toward the 1200 block to find Mission Home. As he walked, Bill began directing an imaginary choir with his free hand while singing the French national anthem, Frank again humming along. They soon reached a residential area, and Bill pulled out the card with the address to check it again. Then he looked up and saw it, a colonial three-storied home with white painted bricks. Outside a sign read: "The Boston Mission. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."

They crossed the street and stood in front of the house. Bill said, "I believe this is the place. We're home, gentlemen, we're home."

"Do you think anyone is there?" asked Stan as he parked the grocery cart next to the sidewalk.

"There's only one way to find out," said Bill as he walked up the front steps. Stan and Frank stood by the sidewalk looking at an ivy-covered bay window and the thick hedge surrounding the yard. Bill rang the doorbell and waited. He looked at Stan and Frank. They looked away from him at the next-door neighbor's flower beds. A jogger ran by and slowed down to scrutinize them. Bill tapped his foot and rang the bell again. He knocked on the door and raised his voice moderately: "Anybody home?" There was no answer.

He turned around and looked at the other houses on the street. He could hear the laughter of children, the distant whine of lawnmowers and weedeaters, and the chirping of a bird above his head in a lilac tree. Several neighbors had noticed the men and begun talking and pointing at them. One man with a portable phone dialed a number and began talking as he looked straight at Bill.

He walked down the steps, dragging the broomstick behind him.

"We'll come back on another day. They weren't expecting us. Maybe we'll call them next time." Stan and Frank reached out to pat Bill on the back.

"Yeah," said Stan. "We'll come back again some other time. Don't worry about it."

Frank's eyes moistened as he looked at Bill and reached to hold Bill's chin to look him in the eye.

"I'm sorry, Frank," Bill said.

Frank put the broomstick in the grocery cart. They then walked out of the

neighborhood, Stan pushing the grocery cart in front. A dog barked at them from inside a house. No one looked up except Frank, who began humming "How Great Thou Art."

A car passed by slowly, and a man wearing sunglasses stared at them until he almost hit another car. Then a purple ball bounced onto the sidewalk, stopping them in their tracks. A little girl with red hair, running barefoot in a white cotton dress, bolted from behind a hedge as Bill caught the ball. She walked up cautiously to him and reached out her hand and smiled, exposing two missing front teeth. He handed her the ball and smiled, exposing his missing tooth. She said, "I gave my teef to the toof fairy, and he gave me a dollar. Put yours under your pillow, and he'll come visit you too." Then she giggled and ran back toward the house behind the hedge as a woman scurried out of the front door saying, "Jennifer, come here right now. You know better than to talk to strangers." She smacked Jennifer's hand. Bill turned toward the woman and tried to smile, but his face tightened. He began walking again at a fast pace. Frank hurried behind him to catch up, along with Stan pushing the cart.

As they passed the neighborhood entrance, two young men in dark suits and white shirts passed them on bicycles going the other way. One of them glanced at the men and nodded to them in silence as a greeting. Frank, the only one aware of the bicyclers, smiled, nodded in return, and tugged at Bill's sleeve.

Ed Snow is an attorney, a former columnist for AML-List, and a Gospel Doctrine teacher living in Atlanta, Georgia. His writings have been published in FARMS Review of Books, Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, Sunstone, Dialogue, Latter-day Digest, Wasatch Review International, Betrachtungen, *and* Zarahemla: A Forum for Mormon Poetry.

On the Road to Osoyoos

by Bessie Soderborg Clark

Beethoven was easing us
Around the dusty mountain bend,
When our headlights caught her
Slender silhouette.
A car was pushing us from behind,
A truck crowding the opposite lane,
We couldn't stop,
We couldn't even hesitate.
Our hearts froze
As we hit her
Broadside.
Froze the screams
In our cab, where they
Lingered until we reached the town,
Where we picked doe hairs
Off our broken grille.

Bessie Soderborg Clark—mother of all writing in a family of rambunctious writers, great-grandmother, and world traveler—taught English in Qing Dao, China, during the 1989–90 school year. She took an M.Ed. Psych at BYU in 1975.

Sunday's Impression

by Robert M. Hogge

Columbus in chains
on a caravel bound for Spain in 1500

Cochineal skies deepen to dark purple
just after sunset

Icarus quivers in molten clay and sand
on Cuba's shores

The sea rolls mazarin
with a frost of emerald

A flash of place
beyond the sun's extinction

Crescent of sea, arc of space
where west squires east

and shapes share secrets
of golden arms
plastered madonnas
mother-of-pearl

Robert M. Hogge is a professor of English at Weber State Univeristy in Ogden, Utah. A former president of the Association for Mormon Letters, he has published his poetry in a variety of journals: BYU Studies, Innisfree, Texture, Petroglyph, *and* Weber Studies.

Living Words for Easter

by Marden J. Clark

You came to us, the living Word as babe
Fulfilling many a prophet's words
What words for miracle of life in virgin womb
The fulfilling miracle of birth

Come touch these limp and crippled words and make
Them live to celebrate your words
Of life: *The kingdom of heaven is like . . .*
Blessed are the . . . I am the light . . .

I am the good shepherd . . . Come unto me . . .
Even so must the son of man be lifted up . . .
They sent you off, borne on a cross. You left
But left your living words with us.

And still you stay with us. That wooden cross
Gave place to stone-bound tomb
For the love of God, what words? For a roll-away
Stone moved only by unseen hand

At last the living word, three nights a-borning,
A single living word, a lamp to light our path
A single word for another "Mary"
And all those other words that live

This Easter morning: *I am the way and the life . . .*
And *I will come again . . .*

Marden J. Clark, professor emeritus at BYU, fills his days trying to scale down a large garden. He also writes a religion column for the Provo Daily Herald, which has given him some understanding, and much puzzlement, about modems.

Light Leaves

by Marden J. Clark

For Rachel, Diana, Caitlin, Eliot, Jane, Stuart: the Wise Family

Those leaves pick delicate spangles from the setting sun
Catching glints of life rustled by the slightest breeze
Through your birch that only appears to weep
From hanging vines.
That giant tree should have died years ago, like any self-
Respecting weeping birch around here. Instead it stands
There lightly dominating the whole of your garden
But not us, its white bole

Sending out a hundred branches, each weighted
With weightless light leaves suspended there only
To catch the late afternoon sun and spangle
Our evening mood.

"The sudden birth of green," you called its springtime
Bursting buds, its spring call to you, forcing
For the first time your full sense of reaping
From others' plantings.

Sunset colors the evening's spangles, but walk with me
Ten steps west: snow off Timpanogos shimmers through
The leaves, frosts the spangles, hints lightly
Of coming fall.

The leaves will leave, but first burst out in fiery fall.
The tree itself, I fear, will finally die, but after years
Of bearing green. A few outer branches at first, then
Larger inner ones,

Until the whole turns black and dies. But do not weep,
Good friends, only the spangles, not the light will leave.
Or if really the light leaves we will all have left
Or will leave with it.

IRREANTUM's Creative Writing department—short stories, poetry, and novel and play excerpts (including works in progress)—is edited by Harlow Clark. Questions, suggestions, and manuscripts should be addressed directly to him at harlowclark@juno.com or c/o IRREANTUM, P.O. Box 50883, Provo, UT 84605.

LDS Publishing News

Bookcraft

Bookcraft recently went to press with the first volume of a six-volume series of Church history travel guides written by a team of BYU Church historians, including well-known author Lamar Barrett. The first volume, which covers New England, will detail the locations of hundreds of Church history and American history sites that will be of interest to members of the LDS Church traveling there. The second volume, which is tentatively scheduled to be available in late summer, will cover New York and Pennsylvania.

Deseret Management Corporation (DMC), the holding company for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints's commercial entities, recently signed a definitive agreement finalizing the acquisition of Bookcraft, Inc. Details of the transaction were not released.

Rodney H. Brady, president and CEO of DMC, commented, "We are excited about the possibilities this acquisition presents. We will now be able to develop synergies with Bookcraft and other DMC-owned entities such as Deseret Book, Deseret News, and Bonneville International Corporation. Working in cooperation with the Brigham Young University, the Church Educational System, and other Church-related entities, these organizations will be able to promote religious and other values-oriented materials throughout the world. The efficiencies and synergies that are possible with this acquisition will also enable the development of new products in electronic and print publishing."

DMC also announced the formation of a new subsidiary, yet to be named, that will oversee some of the electronic activities of the current Bookcraft operations. Robert H. Garff and Alan C. Ashton have both agreed to serve on the board of the new company; Mr. Garff will serve as chairman, while Mr. Ashton will serve as a director. Other directors will be appointed in the near future.

Covenant

Covenant Books is celebrating the 10th anniversary of its popular *Tennis Shoes among the Nephites* series. The series, which now includes six titles, has sold more than 350,000 copies. For the

anniversary, Covenant has released a new four-cassette audio version of the first book in the series, which for the first time includes more than 90 percent of the text.

Along with this audio book, Covenant will have about 40 new titles this year, bolstered by other best-selling authors such as Anita Stansfield and Rachel Ann Nunes as well as upcoming new author Kerry Blair. Blair's book, *The Heart Has Its Seasons,* asks the question, Would you give up Mr. Perfect for Mr. Right?

Convenant has been strengthened lately by some of its recent titles. Artist Val Bagley created a Book of Mormon match game for children that has done very well since it was introduced last fall and is now in its third printing. Covenant was also pleased with a holiday book by Gracia Jones. Jones is the great-great-great-granddaughter of Joseph and Emma Smith, which led her to put together *Celebrating the Holidays with Joseph & Emma,* allowing many customers to connect with Mormonism's first couple.

Another strong seller for Covenant is its *Primary Partners* series of resource books for Primary workers. Last October Covenant introduced CD-ROM versions of the titles, allowing LDS computer users to manipulate the resources in the books with ease through a simple interface.

Gibbs Smith

Authors Carol Lynn Pearson and Orson Scott Card are boosting the list at Gibbs Smith with forthcoming titles. Pearson kicked off a new series for Gibbs Smith last fall with her fable *The Lesson.* The series, called *Fables for Our Time,* will feature tales that teach lessons and explore the struggles that we all face. *The Lesson* has been a strong seller for Gibbs Smith and is now entering its third printing.

Orson Scott Card will continue the series with an illustrated picture book in the fall. The book uses medieval imagery to tell a modern story about a family's struggle raising children and developing their own relationships.

Pearson will also be featured on the fall list, but not in the *Fables* series. Her next book, *What Love Is,* contains the life-long love story of a married couple. It will be illustrated with the same soft and simple style found in *The Lesson.*

Origin

Kenny Kemp, author of *I Hated Heaven,* has a new book that Origin Books will introduce May 1, in time for Father's Day. *Dad Was a Carpenter* features a fresh approach to the life of Christ.

The big news at Origin Books these days is how emergency preparedness books are taking off. James Talmage Stevens's staple *Making the Best of Basics* is flying off bookstore shelves nationwide, even though the book is in its 10th edition. Taking a moderate approach to preparedness, the book started as a hand-published title spread through Relief Society classes and word of mouth in Texas and has grown into a strong seller. There is little doubt that the current frenzy over the year 2000 bug is driving sales of this and other emergency preparedness titles, a fact that is not lost on Origin. To take advantage of this situation, Origin

has been successful in attending preparedness shows nationwide to get its titles into customers' hands.

Origin recently hired Todd Floyd to strengthen its sales force and bring in new products. Floyd was a buyer at ZCMI for 11 years and comes to Origin with the mission of bringing in new products that LDS booksellers can use to strengthen the variety of products that they sell.

Signature

At Signature Books, excitement comes from a forthcoming book of short stories by Phyllis Barber, titled *Parting the Veil*. Barber's stories are drawn from Mormon and Western folklore imagery, such as the Three Nephites and communication from as-yet-unborn children, and feature characters caught between their need to know and their need to doubt, all with a thin or parted veil nearby.

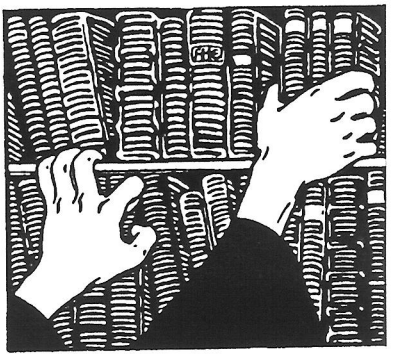
This will be followed up by a reprint of the second book by author Rodello Hunter. Hunter made news recently when her lawsuit against the LDS Church over alleged copyright violations of her first book, *A House of Many Rooms,* was settled. The second book, *A Daughter of Zion,* is, like her first, autobiographical and portrays her life as a faithful member of the LDS Church.

IRREANTUM's LDS Publishing News department is edited by Kent Larsen, with assistance from Scott Bronson. Any items or questions related to LDS publishing news should be addressed directly to Kent. If you are interested in helping with reporting, please volunteer. Kent may be contacted at klarsen@panix.com or 720 West 181st Street, Suite 42, New York, NY 10033.

Book Reviews

Food for Thought

A review of *Saints Well Seasoned: Musings on How Food Nourishes Us Body, Heart, and Soul,* edited by Linda Hoffman Kimball (Deseret Book, 1998). Reviewed by R.W. Rasband.



For this book, Linda Hoffman Kimball asked 30 LDS authors to each write a short essay on what might be called the Mormon meaning of food and include a recipe. The result is this entertaining collection, a combination cookbook and anthology of

thought-provoking pieces; in other words, for literary types who like to eat, this is very nearly an ideal book.

It covers a surprising amount of ground. There are traditional edibles like Dean Hughes's rolls; the recipes of Edward L. Kimball's mother, Camilla; Bruce and Margaret Blair Young's trifle; and Richard Cracroft's Yorkshire pudding, with amusing anglophile essay included. There are recipes that might be called exotic, at least to this Utah Mormon boy: Orson Scott Card's Brazilian Feijoda (and how it cured him of being a finicky eater on his mission); Kathryn H. Kidd's nikudango appetizers. There are even recipes for the cooking-challenged among us: Steve Walker's recommendation for food to accompany driving across the great spaces of the American West is Twizzlers Strawberry Licorice every 20 minutes, and Chris Crowe's muse-food for writers is a big bowl of Pringles mixed with M&Ms, peanuts, and malted milk balls.

Many of the essays are tinged with nostalgia for places and people that are gone. One character trait Mormons share with Jews is an almost ritualistic use of food to sanctify the quotidian. It's with us at the most important events of our lives: Sunday dinners, wedding receptions, missionary comings and goings, funerals. This celebration of food is one of the ways we have left Calvinism behind us. We enjoy the fruits of the earth. We bring heaven and earth together at the meals lovingly prepared to accompany our spiritual occasions. This tasty book reminds us of our LDS heritage of practicality and competence in this-worldly matters of providing hospitality and making room for the sojourners and newcomers among us.

Distant Promises

Two perspectives on Dean Hughes's award-winning novel, *Far From Home* (Deseret Book, 1998).

Reviewed by Jeff Needle

Having finished the third volume in Dean Hughes's massive World War II series, I am left with mixed feelings about this entry.

It's a lively read with lots of action and plot and character development, but, given the nearly 500 pages of narrative, I had hoped Hughes would have moved the story line along a little more than he did.

The central characters of the book are the Thomas family, including Alex, fighting in active duty in Europe; Bobbi, serving as a military nurse in Hawaii; Wally, a prisoner of war in a Japanese interment camp; LaRue, an impetuous young woman living in Salt Lake City with her parents, Brother Thomas (the stake president) and Sister Thomas. And there is the Stolz family, native Germans fighting against Hitler's campaign.

I should have been warned about the nature of this volume. From the inside flyleaf: "Alex Thomas is still battling the Nazi forces . . . Wally is still a prisoner of war." Still, still—yes, everyone seems to still be doing what they did in volume two.

If one is looking for story development, it's just not here. This was a

disappointment. But what you will find in volume three is character and spiritual development. The main characters begin asking questions about life, love, God, and the future. The introspection is much more pronounced in volume three than it is in the preceding volumes.

And, happily, some of the characters actually grow for all their experiences. LaRue is a self-centered 15-year old, headstrong and rebellious. But now she knows it. Alex is a man of weak faith, but now he knows it. Concentrating on personal growth issues rather than plotline, Hughes has caused his characters to mature and come to terms with their various situations.

If this was deliberate, then Hughes has succeeded nicely. But only at the cost of what I thought was undue repetition. Alex is a fighter and is involved in some terrible encounters on the battlefield. However, after the tenth battle (or so) I began to tire of reading about blood and guts, bandages and foxholes. I wanted the story to move on. I wanted Alex to get involved in something else.

Similarly, Bobbi spends much of this book longing for her boyfriend, Richard. She laments his absence and wonders when, or if, she will ever see him again. But how many times do I really want to read the same lament?

When reporting factually on the trials of war, such repetition is inevitable. But fiction should provide a vehicle for stepping outside the monotony and getting the characters to new and exciting places in their lives.

THEOLOGICAL THEMES

Several theological themes appear in the book. In particular, Hughes explores the question of theodicy: how does one explain evil in a universe presided over by a good God? Here is a typical exchange:

> "Oh, Ishi [Bobbi's friend]. It's all so awful. When I was younger, I guess I got the idea that if I was good, and prayed, and tried to be faithful, I wouldn't have to go through anything really terrible. But now, since Gene [Bobbi's brother] died, it's like my blinders have been taken off—and I feel like I'm fair game for anything. It makes me angry sometimes; it doesn't seem fair, and it makes me mad."
>
> "Who are you mad at?"
>
> "I don't know. No one. It just doesn't seem like life ought to be like that."
>
> "So you think God got his plan a little fouled up?"
>
> Bobbi tried to smile, and she didn't answer, didn't want to say that. But the truth was, what she felt ran much deeper than that. She had worked so hard to accept Gene's death, but it made her furious to think God could stay out of this now. He could bring Richard back to her, safe and sound, if he just chose to. (123–24)

This is a constant theme: If only God wanted to fix things up, he would. But surely it occurs to Hughes that this is precisely not the classical Mormon cosmology. By rejecting the idea of a creation ex nihilo and by adopting a unique concept of a limited God, then perhaps he can't just fix things up.

Such a simplistic view of God, I had thought, was not part of Mormonism. But

it is part of Hughes's characters' view. This tension is never really resolved and leaves the reader with the impression that Mormons have no better answer to the theodicy problem than other Christians do. This is, of course, manifestly not true.

LaRue struggles with issues of sexuality and permissiveness. Her father, President Thomas, has sound advice for her, but he is presented pretty much as a buffoon, stumbling through his authoritative pronouncements, trying to find something that will ring true in the ears of his family. Shouldn't such an important area as sexual behavior have a more positive role model?

MORMON FICTION?

All this brings me to a fundamental question: Just what is Mormon fiction? Try as I might, I just couldn't figure out why this is a Mormon novel.

Yes, there are cosmetic touches. Alex takes his comrades to sacrament meeting. They unanimously find it inspiring and interesting. Later, in a foxhole, Alex is offered some tea. He refuses, and his comrades have a pretty good inventory of what he will or will not consume, no matter what the conditions. And much later, in the heat of battle, when all seems lost, one of Alex's soldiers wants Alex to make him a Mormon.

But does this make the work a Mormon novel? This is where I'm a bit confused. Despite the cosmetics, there doesn't seem to be any undercurrent of thought that reflects Mormonism any more than it would any normal American family at the time. Strong families, after all, are not exclusive to Mormonism.

There are clearly Mormon ways of understanding God and the flow of life. These ways are not, in my view, present in this novel. Given the context of war and peace, it seems that more that is explicitly Mormon could have been included.

A POSITIVE NOTE

Let me end this on a positive note. It may be that a segment of the Mormon reading audience doesn't care about the things I've discussed here. There may be two ways of looking at this whole idea of Mormon literature: whether the book is explicitly Mormon in both its superficial references and its underlying theological approach, or whether the book is safe reading for those avoiding the excesses of worldly literature. *Far from Home* is, after all, safe reading. Young people will like the action; adults will appreciate the reflections on the awful nature of war and its effect on the family.

My own taste seems to go elsewhere. I will probably finish out the series (projected to five volumes) only to resolve the various threads that have been started in the first three volumes. My request to Mr. Hughes: please move the story along more quickly. And (with a wry smile) avoid the use of *still* on the dustjacket.

Reviewed by Ardis E. Parshall

Far from Home is book three of the author's *Children of the Promise* series set in the Second World War, so we are familiar with the characters. The story has reached 1944, a year when the war has been dragging on so long that normal life is hard to remember; yet the end is not in sight. Initial enthusiasms have cooled but

the wrap-up has not yet begun, so everyone is hanging on and pushing ahead as well as they can without major signs of progress. For this reason, the action of the narrative is slower: Alex is fighting, as he has been for quite some time; Wally survives as a POW; Bobbi nurses endless streams of the wounded; President Thomas continues to make money in the war effort and struggles to keep his family and stake together. Because the outside action has slowed, though, the characters are freer to adapt in personal ways. I found this deeply satisfying and enlightening.

Wally, for example, does not want to surrender to the hate and anger that come so naturally to him. Yet he discovers that he needs the energy and drive that come from hatred in order to keep fighting to live. Almost against his will, he comes to recognize some of his guards as individuals rather than as animals, which interferes with his decision to hate today and forgive tomorrow.

While Wally struggles to learn how far to hate, Bobbi struggles to learn how far to love. She is stationed in Hawaii and associates closely with members of her multiracial LDS branch. Some of her friends are involved in interracial courtships, and although Bobbi has learned to suspend her prejudices concerning branch and social relationships, she is not sure how she ought to feel about mixed marriages. She only knows how difficult such a marriage would be back in Utah.

The most interesting characters are the family members who are back in Salt Lake, President and Sister Thomas and their teenaged daughter LaRue. LaRue is fooling herself into believing that certain improper activities are all right as a contribution to the war effort and because she needs to grow up fast in unsettled times. Her father cannot control her activities despite (or because of) his authoritarian statements, not only because LaRue is stubborn but also because Sister Thomas unexpectedly speaks up in LaRue's behalf. Far from being the respected and obeyed patriarch President Thomas has always assumed himself to be, he finds that the world has changed around him, that his wife has a mind of her own, and that he must trust his daughter to hang on to the principles he has taught her all her life.

All of the other major characters—Anna and her mother in England, Alex in Germany, the Stoltz men wherever they happen to be—are going through variations of the same struggle. They need and want to remain true to what they believe is most important, yet they must find a way to live that truth in new ways. None of the behaviors and activities of earlier, calmer times are available to them. The ruts they might have fallen into have been blown up—literally—so their faith has to be dynamic and constantly adaptive.

These novels would succeed on the merits of the individual characters and the dramatic circumstances surrounding them, as would any historical novel written with any degree of skill. But the *Children of the Promise* series, especially *Far from Home,* succeeds for this Mormon reader on another level which is absent

from all other current LDS historical fiction. It is not merely an attempt to bring the past to life or even to cause the reader to consider how he would have acted in the drama of our past. Instead, these novels force a reader to examine his own developing faith, whether tending toward growth or loss. Anyone who has been a member of the Church for any significant period has had to face the interior dilemmas, if not the exterior surroundings, of the Thomas and Stoltz families.

Haven't we all had to consider, as Wally is doing, whether "Love thy neighbor" really includes someone who is causing us significant, ongoing harm? Haven't we all had to resolve a conflict between our theoretical beliefs that we are all equal children of God, and our practical concerns, as Bobbi must do when she imagines a mixed-race couple moving to Salt Lake? Haven't all parents had to let their children make mistakes at some point, as the Thomases have to do with LaRue?

Any religious person eventually has to handle those problems. *Children of the Promise* also raises some problems that are extremely, if not uniquely, Mormon. Bobbi, for instance, understands the plan of salvation. She knows that her brother Gene is ultimately safe and that if anything happens to her boyfriend Richard he is likewise not lost. She also understands the necessity of God allowing man to suffer the consequences of evil actions. But like anyone raised as a Mormon, she believes in miracles and has had countless Primary lessons demonstrating that God will intervene in individual lives. Yet experiences in the war have taught her that God does not always grant such miracles, even to faithful, prayerful Mormons who have always done everything their fathers and the Church have taught them is right. In conversation with an LDS friend, she says:

> "Hazel, I don't think God is in control of our lives. He doesn't make everything happen."
>
> "I didn't say that, Bobbi. I just said we have to trust him."
>
> "I do trust God. I don't trust man." But that wasn't really true, because in the back of Bobbi's mind was still the idea that God could make this right if he wanted to. He could pluck Richard from the ocean. He could put him in a safe place. He could preserve him for Bobbi. And if he didn't, then why not? Was he unconcerned about such trivial matters? . . .
>
> "You need to decide. Do you believe God cares about you or don't you?"
>
> Bobbi knew the correct answer, the one she had learned in church. But she didn't feel it right now—didn't sense the slightest crack in God's armor. (204–5)

In scenes like that, and there are many, Hughes has captured the frequent conflict I have between what I know in my head and feel in my heart, between what I want and what I want to believe.

Just as Bobbi must somehow resolve what she was taught yesterday with what she is living today, her family at home must deal with the sudden end to some of their assumptions. President Thomas, for example, was raised in the Salt Lake Valley. Although he has grown up with tales of earlier persecution, the Church in his lifetime has been exceptionally peaceful and stable. He honestly believes that

the worst is past, that the Church and its members, especially members like him who have faithfully kept the commandments, will be blessed and flourish until some distant end-of-the-world tribulations. He has no reason to doubt that assumption: he has risen to prominence in both the Church and business worlds; he has a large and generally obedient family, including an unquestioningly supportive wife; he has the trust and respect of everyone who matters to him. He believes he can handle his conflicts with Wally and LaRue by applying the patriarchal pressure he feels entitled to exercise.

But although he is safe at home, surrounded by the trappings of authority and security, those assumptions are suddenly no longer valid. His children are in mortal danger, and no amount of fervent prayer will bring them all safely home again. The fatherly orders he feels justified in issuing are disregarded by his daughter, and, wonder of wonders, his wife is no longer a simple prop to his life but is insisting on full partnership. The valley that has always kept safety in and danger out is no longer a refuge; the war is bringing outside influences into his very home, and he cannot exclude them. Adding to the difficulty of these upheavals is the fact that they arrive when President Thomas is a middle-aged man; his initial attempts to deal with them are as awkward as any teenager's, and he suffers a further loss of dignity by behaving as ineptly as his own children.

Any reader of history, even historical fiction, needs to remember that although we know how things turned out, outcomes are never inevitable to people involved in the events. We know that there was an overall favorable end to the war and that most soldiers and nurses came home. We know that the Church began to grow at a phenomenal rate following the war and that Salt Lake City was not destroyed by the outside influences brought in from troop trains. But the Thomases and the Stoltzes cannot know that except by faith, and they must feel their way step by step, trying to extract what is essential and eternal in their beliefs out of the wreckage of merely cultural assumptions. That's what contemporary Mormons have to do, as well. We cannot know exactly how our lives or our world will develop, so we cannot head directly toward an inevitable future. That's why I like *Children of the Promise* so much.

Polygamy: Our Forgotten Heritage

A review of Todd Compton's *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Signature Books, 1997). Reviewed by Boyd Petersen.

THE CHURCH AND POLYGAMY

Polygamy is an issue that we as a Mormon culture often wish would simply go away. We seem to be embarrassed by our past. The current Priesthood–Relief Society manual on the teachings of Brigham Young is a case in point. Brigham Young was one of the most married men in American history, having 16 wives by which he had children and 9 wives who bore him none (see Leonard Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* [New York: Knopf, 1985], 420–21). Nevertheless, the Priesthood–Relief Society manual never acknowledges that he had more than one wife at a time and only mentions two (Miriam Angeline Works, who died in September 1832, and Mary Ann Angell, who married Brigham in February 1834). Certainly this reflects our cultural reluctance to discuss polygamy publicly.

I agree with Eugene England (see "On Fidelity, Polygamy, and Celestial Marriage," *Dialogue,* Winter 1987, 138–53) that polygamy was a divine commandment revealed to a specific people at a specific time for a specific purpose and that the decision to curtail its practice was also a divine commandment (so please do not bother to forward my name to any group in Manti). Nevertheless, I also believe it both denies our heritage and dishonors our pioneer ancestors to try to dust under the rug a belief for which our ancestors sacrificed greatly. These people were not sinners with unholy home lives; rather, they were individuals who passed an Abrahamic test, demonstrating their devotion to God, the Church, and its leaders by entering into the covenants of plural marriage. As one who is descended from such ancestors, I too share Eugene England's desire to "honor those literal ancestors and my many spiritual ancestors who lived that law—faithfully, morally, and at enormous costs" ("On Fidelity," 140). And to deny the historical fact of polygamy is certainly to dishonor those ancestors.

Furthermore, I believe our collective denial only lends credibility to anti-Mormon authors who are more than happy to expose the practice to unknowing Mormons. This, I believe, can only drive members from the Church when they realize that the historical record bears out the words of anti-Mormons and shows how strenuously we as a Mormon culture are trying to deny our history.

That being said, I welcome the publication of Todd Compton's *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith.* Surely, given our collective denial, only an independent Mormon press would dare to publish this book. And yet the book is hardly anti-Mormon. In fact, Compton himself states that his book is "unabashedly celebratory" as he "tries to celebrate in a responsible, balanced way that all of its characters, female and male, Relief Society president and prophet, had weaknesses as well as strengths" (x–xi). Though Compton's portrait is not wholly positive, he acknowledges that the practice was "developed by sincerely religious men" (21) rather than cooked up by a bunch of sex-crazed misogynists. Therefore, Compton's book should make few friends among either anti-Mormons out to

portray Joseph Smith as a philandering womanizer or Mormons who wish to hide from our polygamous past.

SUMMARY

Mormon polygamy created a "tragic ambiguity," argues Compton. The eternal significance of the Principle was tempered by the acute neglect women received. While men received status from entering the practice, women received fewer financial resources and less marital attention. Nevertheless, Compton argues that the practice was instituted for purely religious reasons: early Mormonism's striving toward Biblical primitivism led Joseph Smith to embrace many Old Testament practices. Furthermore, the practice became a method for establishing a sort of religious dynasticism: women who were sealed to Joseph Smith established an eternal tie between their entire family and the Prophet and brought spiritual rewards to all.

Compton argues that there is well-documented evidence for 33 marriages to Joseph Smith. While Danel Bachman documented only 31 in his 1975 thesis *A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage before the Death of Joseph Smith,* Compton's list is conservative compared to other researchers': George D. Smith lists 43, D. Michael Quinn lists 46, and Fawn Brodie lists 48.

Compton dispels many myths harbored by both Mormons and anti-Mormons about polygamy. First, there is no evidence that the practice was instituted to provide care for unattached older women. In fact, Compton reveals the seldom if ever mentioned fact that one-third of the women sealed to Joseph Smith were already married, thereby creating some unusual polyandrous relationships. Second, Compton shows that sexual relations between Smith and his wives did occur. Smith considered himself married to these women in every sense of the word. Third, Compton dis-misses the notion many anti-Mormons have that Smith's marriage to Fanny Alger was an affair and provides documentation to show that it was indeed a marriage.

STRENGTHS

Polygamy is an issue about which there are and have been few unbiased writers. There

were just as many people during Joseph Smith's lifetime who used polygamy as an issue to raise suspicion and anger towards the Church as there are today. Several contemporary historians seem to ignore this fact and cite contemporaneous sources without concern for any agenda, hidden or otherwise, that a source might have had. I have seen articles in which testimony from disaffected Mormons like John C. Bennett is granted the same credibility—or more—as that from loyal Mormons. Compton has, in my opinion, done an admirable job in handling his sources. He doesn't necessarily shy away from sources with an anti-Mormon bias, but when he does use them he acknowledges their bias and attempts to corroborate the story with a source from the loyal Church body.

The biggest strength of Compton's book is his choice to focus on the 33 individual women who were married to Joseph Smith. This provides us with a moving personal look at their lives as well as a greater understanding of the historical milieu of the period. And, when available, Compton shares long passages of their personal writings that are deeply moving and expressed with a simple eloquence. Some are full of pathos, like Eliza Maria Partridge's description of becoming a plural wife:

> A woman living in polygamy dare not let it be known and nothing but a firm desire to keep the comandments of the Lord could have induced a girl to marry in that way. I thought my trials were very severe in that line and I am often led to wonder how it was that a person of my temperament could get along with it and not rebel, but I know it was the Lord who kept me from opposing his plans although in my heart I felt that I could not submit to them, but I did and I am thankful to my Heavenly Father for the care he had over me in those troublous times. (433–34)

Others are full of faith and hope, like this passage from Fanny Young to her brother John:

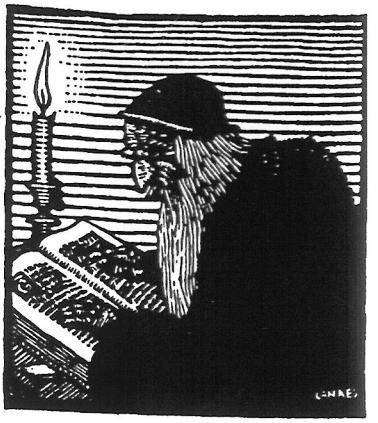
> Be of good cheer br John, salvation is nearer than when we first believ'd—I rejoice in hope of the glory of God—which I believe my eyes will behold, and my heart exult in. Strive to live near the Lord br John for I find nothing to comfort my soul but the old fashion'd love of God! even that love which is stronger than death. this alone gives us the victory.—this is all my consolation, amid the sorrows and turmoils of this inconstant life. (618)

Still others document the miraculous events at the time of the Restoration, as does Zina Diantha Huntington's description of the gifts she experienced after baptism:

> The gifts of the gospel were manifest the first time I ever sang . . . after being baptised into the church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints around me was as light as the blaze of a candle I was surrounded a heavenly influence and no unpleasent sensation from that day the gift has remained with me. (75)

Compton not only chooses to include the miraculous, but he also wisely elects not to editorialize about these supernatural events. He argues in the introduction to the book that these stories help not only "reproduce the world view of nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints" but also often help us to understand what motivated these women

to enter polygamous relationships (xii–xiii). His forthright inclusion of the women's spiritual experiences helps us to understand why they could accept the practice. They saw it as a divine calling. Accounts leaving out such experiences of heavenly ministrations, gifts, and miracles leave nothing but the socially outrageous idea of one man married to many women.



WEAKNESSES

One of the main strengths of the book also becomes its main weakness. By focusing on the individual wives, Compton exposes the dearth of sources available about some of these individual women. Some chapters, like the chapter on Louisa Beaman, are so short on data that they appear as fictionalized biographies. Compton's recurrent use of words like "apparently," "probably," "may have," and "one imagines" leaves the reader with the same feeling one gets from reading Fawn Brodie: that the biographer is turning fiction writer, reading the minds of characters who never existed outside the mind of the author.

Furthermore, I believe Compton's devotion to revisionist-feminist readings of the historical past sometimes blinds him to the double-edged sword that was polygamy. Certainly polygamy left many women lonely, but it also left many men lonely: the men who were required to give their wives to Joseph. Compton shows how Zina Diantha Huntington was required to leave her first husband, Henry Jacobs, following Joseph Smith's death and live instead with Joseph's proxy, Brigham Young. Despite his flaws, Jacobs clearly loved Zina deeply and was left without her for both time and eternity. His letters to Zina are some of the most pathetic in the book. "I do not murmur nor complain at the Handlings of god no veryly no . . . I have no feelings against [Brigham Young] nor never had, all is right according to the Law of the Celestial kingdom of our God Joseph." "But I feel alone," Jacobs continues, "& no one to speak to to call my own I feell Like a Lamb without a Mother" (91). Compton does not ignore Jacobs's pain, nor does he make light of it, but he does focus his thesis on the way polygamy treated the wives without acknowledging that it had a similar effect on the men. Furthermore, even the men who had more than one wife could never possibly develop the deep relationship with any one of them that a monogamous marriage would allow. This system of marriage would be just as lonely for both the polygamous husband and the men whose wives were taken from them as it was for the polygamous wives. In fact, the wives probably were less lonely than the men were since, as Compton notes, they developed deep relationships with their sister wives, which compensated in some manner for the lack of attention from their husbands. Polygamy clearly left both sexes lonely.

My chief complaint—and one I share with many others I've talked to—is the

book's referencing system. Instead of using footnotes, the publisher has chosen to place all references at the end of the book, floating unconnected from the text of the book itself. I suspect this is the publisher's decision rather than the author's. If D. Michael Quinn's *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* were a more recent publication, I would argue that the choice was a reactionary overcompensation for the publisher's choice to use APA style in Quinn's book, placing the references within the text where they interfered with the reading. But in this case, the references are so disconnected from the text that one gets frustrated finding them and finally forgets to read them at all.

This is troubling to anyone who is interested in sources—and with a topic like early Mormon polygamy, sources are critical. The publisher has chosen to employ other conventions of historical writing, such as preserving original misspellings and usage errors in quotations, so it is clear they know their audience is expecting a scholarly historical work. If Compton were not so fair in citing sources, one would suspect that he was trying to hide something by not using footnotes. However, I believe that the publisher is simply trying not to distract the reader from the text with intrusive citations. But this unfortunate editorial decision belies the assumption that the audience for this book expects a certain level of scholarship and would therefore be familiar with, rather than distracted by, footnotes. Why Signature Books chose to use a referencing system that is so foreign to such a genre is both mystifying and frustrating.

My final complaint is that Compton's prose is sometimes tedious and not well edited, packed with clause after clause of related but not necessarily sequential information. For instance, we read: "Though Henry was halfway across Iowa, driving a covered wagon for his wife and two sons, one of them newborn, through danger and privation, at this difficult time, of all times, he was suddenly sent away on a mission" (88). In another convoluted sentence, Compton writes: "Then, on April 3, Zina, who was now twenty-nine, bore a daughter, Zina Presendia, at Old Log Row, which doubtless left her overjoyed" (98). The stacking of phrases and clauses in a comma extravaganza bogs the reader down with parenthetical statements before ever arriving at the main verb. While these two examples are extreme, the problem is consistent throughout the book. The prose should have undergone many more hours of editing before publication.

CONCLUSION

Despite some weaknesses, Compton's *In Sacred Loneliness* is a welcome addition to our understanding of Mormon polygamy. He exposes the myths, documents the facts, and helps us approach the worldview of our polygamous ancestors. In doing so, he honors those who went before as both faithful Saints who met severe trials with devotion and courage and as human beings with feelings, failings, and fortitude.

Note: Earlier versions of these reviews appeared on AML-List.

IRREANTUM's Book Review department is edited by Jana Remy. Any questions or suggestions related to book reviews should be addressed directly to her. If you would like to write book reviews or otherwise assist, please query Jana at janaremy@juno.com or 167 Tangelo, Irvine, CA 92606.

AML-List Highlights

This space will be used to reproduce pithy thoughts, thought-provoking comments, and amusing tidbits from AML-List, an ongoing electronic conversation cosponsored by the Association for Mormon Letters and the English Department of Weber State University. AML-List is moderated by Benson Parkinson, an LDS novelist who works days as an editor. For this first, introductory column, we felt it would be worthwhile to provide some random facts, together with a short sampling of the kind of conversation that takes place over AML-List.

AML-List comes in three flavors: AML-List (an open discussion limited to 30 posts a day); AML-Mag (a selection of AML-List columns, reviews, newspaper items, and discussion, limited to 10 posts a day); and AML-List Digest (nightly compilation of AML-List posts). To subscribe to AML-List, send an e-mail message to AML-Request@cc.weber.edu that reads: Subscribe AML-List "Your Name in Quotes" <your@address.in.brackets>.

AML-List currently has 235 subscribers. Members include LDS and non-LDS, authors and readers, artists, musicians, critics, and others; the only thing that is required is an interest in Mormon arts and letters. In a recent month (February 1999), approximately 76 people posted 422 messages (the total also includes some forwarded news articles). Threads, or topics of conversation for the month, ranged from writing and publishing poetry to a

recent biography of David Hyrum Smith (youngest son of Joseph Smith), the recently announced Bookcraft–Deseret Book merger, Johnny Whittaker and the six degrees of separation game, workshops and readings, opinions of Mormon music, writing habits of AML-List subscribers, appropriate fonts and formats for story submission, and much more.

One of the most vigorous threads during early March 1999 was the Metaphors for Grace thread, which started with a discussion of best-selling Mormon authors. On March 1, John L. Needham commented that Stephen Robinson's 1992 book, *Believing Christ,* is arguably "the best-selling LDS devotional/theology book of the 90s," and asked:

> Any ideas about what has made his book so successful? Is it the topic? The style? The storytelling ("the parable of the bicycle" and all the anecdotes)?

J. Scott Bronson (March 2) replied in part:

> I think that's the point of the book, that grace plays a greater part in the Atonement than many Mormons want to believe. And this is why I think the book is doing so well.

To which Jeff Needle (March 4) responded as follows:

> Sadly, most evangelicals who have read [Robinson don't] think he understands grace at all. Grace doesn't have us saving anything toward the purchase of the bicycle. Grace drops the bike into our hands, asking nothing in payment for it. Yes, it expects a gracious response, but it is, after all, a gift, free and clear.
>
> Robinson's bicycle parable still leaves the question open, how much must I do? When is enough considered enough? Grace asks nothing.

Then, on March 5, Jonathan Langford asked:

> All of the metaphors and comparisons for grace and the Atonement that I have encountered in popular Mormon parlance seem to me to have inherent limitations. Of course, that's partly the nature of any comparison—that it's not the real thing, and at some point the analogy breaks down. . . .
>
> What other images and analogues can we identify that have been used to describe the Atonement and the role of grace within the LDS community? What are their inherent strengths and limitations?

From this point, the conversation broadened to include a variety of examples from many different people, only a small sampling of which can be excerpted here. Richard C. Russell (March 5) kicked off the discussion with the following comparisons:

> One [metaphor] used in early CES seminary curriculum materials was a man in a pit who cannot climb out until someone lowers a ladder into it. He is saved from perishing in the hole because the means to get out are readily at hand. He must climb up the rungs to safety. . . .
>
> Jeff Holland . . . spoke of a hiker who had fallen to a narrow ledge,

been injured and was facing sure death in exposure to the elements and who could hardly move without falling off. Jesus lowers the rope that he has to tie around his waist and be pulled to safety. (Simply a variation on the first.)

My own favorite is about someone who falls off an ocean liner and is going down for the third time when the ship finally circles around and they drop him a life saver. No time to supply a raft or drop someone to help. His last ounce of strength is used to hold onto the life saver while they hoist him aboard.

All three suffer from limitations and all three refer to rescues which are incomplete metaphors for atonement.

More examples followed, together with discussion of the metaphors that had been offered up on the list. By the following Tuesday, Ardis Parshall (March 9) wrote:

> I've tried all weekend to come up with another metaphor that is commonly used for grace, besides the few that have been noted (and generally found lacking). The only other one I can think of is the rowboat, with one oar labeled "faith" (a major aspect of the acceptance of grace) and the other oar labeled "works." The idea is that both oars need to be used or else the boat goes nowhere.

After commenting on the shortcomings of that metaphor, Ardis asked,

> Does this dearth of metaphors reflect our general avoidance of the topic in most Church settings?

However, Clark Goble (also on March 9) followed up with a catalog of scriptural and other metaphors for grace, including:

> 1. Ransom payment for captured prisoners made slaves during a war. Commonly used by Isaiah.
> 2. Homecoming and embrace, re-entry to the family. Used by Nephi, Isaiah, and Christ in the prodigal son. This is also developed extensively in Nibley's best article, the one on Atonement at the end of Approaching Zion.
> 3. Substitution form. Used in the Jacob and Abraham story, and developed into the penal theory in the medieval period. The later form I don't care for.
> 4. Payment on the bike analogy. Very common in Mormonism. . . .
> 5. Helicopter rescue of man praying for help on the cliff. This started out as a bad joke. (The climbers offer a rope, the boaters offer to get help, the helicopter offers a ladder—in each case the man turns them down, saying God will help him. He falls and dies and God says those other things were what he sent as help.) A great metaphor in my opinion and frequently quoted in church.
> 6. The debtor. This is the idea of the debtor locked in prison and thus unable to work to be able to repay his debts. I think this one developed in the medieval period, but is related to (1). I like this one a lot. It points out that sometimes the problem isn't works, but being kept

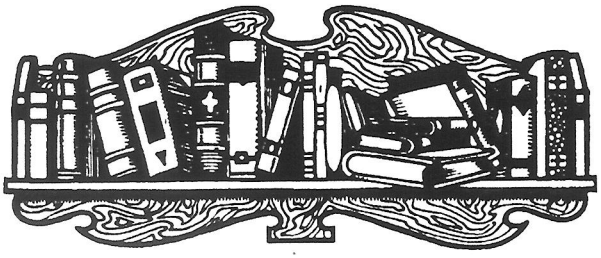
from being able to perform works.

7. The bridge. A lot of people have written how much they hate this metaphor. I love it a lot. The reason I love it is because it emphasizes the view from the other side of grace, the idea that grace is a sacrifice for God.

. . .

8. The house analogy. This is actually three metaphors showing the way people talk about grace. I've heard it a lot. The idea is that we are trying to reach a house. In one case God gives us a map but we have to walk to the house. The map is God's grace. (This is the Pelegian view of grace as knowledge imparted by God.) The next is the idea that God teleports us into the house. This is the more "grace and no works" view. The next is the view that God gives us a map, provides food along the way, helps ward off darkness and opposition, but always lets us choose the direction we walk. The idea was that this later form was Mormon grace. . . .

9. Poseidon Adventure. Don't laugh. . . . The idea is that there is a way out of the sinking ship and Christ sacrifices his life to open a way out. If you don't go through the door then you have to suffer as Christ did who opened the door. This one fails on several points as well but works on many levels.

Later columns will feature a broader sampling of quotes from several different threads. Join AML-List, and next issue your musings may find a place here as well! For more information, see the AML-List web page at http://cc.weber.edu/~byparkinson/aml-list.html.

IRREANTUM's AML-List Highlights department is edited by Jonathan Langford. If you have any questions or suggestions or are interested in helping choose material from AML-List, contact Jonathan at jlangfor@pressenter.com.